



News Release

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School starts soon: get your kids ready to pass their classes, not disease

Make sure children are up-to-date on whooping cough, other vaccines

OLYMPIA — Now's the time to make sure children are protected from diseases before they start school. All vaccines required to enroll in school are available to children at no cost.

This is especially important because we're in the midst of a whooping cough epidemic. Nearly 3,300 cases of whooping cough have been reported so far this year – more than has been reported in Washington since the early 1940s.

"We must be sure our kids start the school year on the right foot," said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, a pediatrician. "Unvaccinated kids are more likely to catch and spread serious illnesses like whooping cough. That's why it's so important to protect children from this and other preventable diseases."

Washington's youngsters need several vaccines before they can attend school and child care. Two vaccines protect against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis – or whooping cough. The DTaP vaccine is required for kids entering child care and kindergarten. One dose of Tdap vaccine is required for kids 11 and older in sixth through 11th grade.

Parents can find out which [vaccines are required for school and child care attendance](#) online. Be sure to ask for vaccination records from your health care provider for your children now so you'll have enough time to get any immunizations they might need.

Kids who aren't fully immunized may be sent home from school, preschool, or child care if a disease outbreak occurs. Last year [a new law](#) changed the process for parents or guardians to exempt their child from required immunizations. They must now fill out and submit an exemption certificate, signed by a health care provider verifying the provider has shared information on immunization benefits and risks.

— More —

No-cost vaccines are offered for children up to age 19 through health care providers participating in the state's Childhood Vaccine Program. They may charge an office visit fee and a fee to give the vaccine, called an administration fee. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask the health care provider to waive the cost.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call a [local health agency](#) or the [WithinReach](#) (www.withinreachwa.org) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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